

**East End Neighborhood Forum's Statement to the Environmental Protection Agency
(EPA) regarding Seniors and Air Pollution**

Good afternoon. My name is Joan Flood. I am senior organizer for the East End Neighborhood Forum which is a coalition of over a dozen community based organizations and community development corporations based in the East End of Pittsburgh, who work together to address common and complex community issues. I stand here today to express our concern about the devaluation that the Administration places on senior citizens' lives in designing air quality regulations.

The East End Neighborhood Forum represents 9 communities in Pittsburgh's East End where close to 20% of the population is aged over 65. Seniors are particularly vulnerable to the effects of air pollution, smog and ground level ozone, especially those with a history of heart or lung problems. These facts are particularly problematic given that Allegheny County is among the dirtiest 10% of all counties in the US in terms of air quality and hazardous air pollutants, with one of the oldest populations in the country. Such air pollution has implications, for the quality of life and life span of our seniors, and for society because of the economic cost of treating those with chronic lung conditions.

During 2002, the East End Neighborhood Forum worked with a group of Biology students from Chatham College who studied the quality of air in the East End and the implications that this has for children and seniors. These students examined the level of diesel fuel emissions in three sections of the East End – along the MLK bus way, outside UPMC Cancer Center and by the Port Authority bus station in East Liberty. In the air samples for all of these areas, the students found that the toxicity was at levels that are injurious to the health of all ages, but especially children and the elderly. The air quality was very much below what is

considered safe by current EPA standards. Considering that seniors are already at risk in Pittsburgh's East End with the existing, safeguards of the Clean Air Act, we have a justifiably serious concern for the future health of our area seniors since the Clear Skies Proposal allows more air pollution than current law.

Given that senior citizens suffer greater health hazards from ingesting polluted air, it is extremely biased and unfair for the Federal Government to decide that seniors should be given a lesser value than younger people when deciding their worth under air quality regulations. Senior citizens have worked and contributed to our society, and deserve respect and protection from harm. Cheapening the lives of seniors in this way creates an atmosphere whereby the loss of human life is deemed acceptable and cost effective.

When human lives are at stake, we cannot decide that some are more valuable than others. Senior citizens are important, contributing members of our society and as such must be valued at least equal to those younger than them.

The East End Neighborhood Forum strongly objects to the idea of using a cost-benefit analysis to decide the value of the life of a senior citizen because the ingestion of polluted air is not something that is done through a well-informed, free choice. Healthy neighborhoods are essential to the growth of our city and to the quality of life for all Americans. For this reason we cannot afford to stop the progress towards making America's air cleaner. The cost in lives lost, and risks to the health of seniors and Americans of all ages is too high. Pittsburghers and indeed all Americans deserve to have stricter air quality standards to protect our seniors and the future of our communities and our country.

Thank you.